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THE CONNECTION  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
WITH EARLY  
AMERICAN DISCOVERY  
AND  
COLONIZATION.

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BY THE REV. WILLIAM STEVENS PERRY, M. A.

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# THE CONNECTION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND WITH EARLY AMERICAN DISCOVERY AND COLONIZATION.

BY REV. WILLIAM STEVENS PERRY,

*Rector of St. Stephen's Church, Portland, Maine, and a Member of the Historical Societies of Maine, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania.*

The deep religious character of the early colonists of our land other than the Puritans of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, has been little noticed by historians, and rarely if ever alluded to in the more popular compends whence most of our countrymen gain their acquaintance with the annals of our discovery and settlement. And yet, as might have been inferred from the condition of both Church and State in England—at a time not very far removed from the purifying of the Reformation and the Marian fires, and when, in the ceaseless and embittered struggle with France and Spain for the Empire of the West, it was a religious war that was waged, in which Raleigh, Gilbert, Drake, and their compeers, were champions of the Protestant faith of the English Church, against the Papacy and its allies—the leaders of colonization at home, the earliest voyagers to our shores and the settlers here, were men influenced full as much by the desire for the salvation of souls, the good of the Church of Christ, and the wide extension of the limits of a common Christianity, as that much-lauded company whose landing on Plymouth Rock has received a world's eulogium. I have no wish to disparage the Puritans, or to despoil them of their well-earned honors. I only ask that the simple fact that members and ministers of the English Church were in advance of them both in the patient endurance of the hardships of colonization and in the noble work of Christianizing the aborigines, should also be remembered and acknowledged. Perhaps a few references to these well established facts of history, will fittingly preface and confirm the statements I propose to make, with reference to the piety and faith of the little colony at Fort St. George in Maine in 1607-8, the anniversary of whose landing day has of late received for the first time appropriate attention.

Even at the early date of A. D. 1578, more than forty years before the landing at Plymouth, had the wilds of North America echoed with the solemn words of the service of the English Church,—words first set forth in English less than thirty years before by the subsequently martyred Bishops and Presbyters of that reformed Communion; and words fitting, from their scripturalness and their spirituality, to be the vehicle of the first act

of public Protestant devotion in a new world. Martin Frobisher, who first led an English colony to our shores, and among whose pious "Articles and Orders to be observed for the Fleete," was "Imprimis, to banish swearing, dice and card-playing, and filthy communication, and to serve God twice a day with the ordinary service of usual in the churches of England,"<sup>a</sup> was wont thus to set sail on his expeditions of discovery and colonization:

"On Monday morning, the 27th of May, aboard the *Ayde*, we received all the Communion by the Minister of Grauesend, and prepared us as good Christians towards God, and resolute men for all fortunes. and towards night we departed for Tilberry Hope."<sup>b</sup>

And so when on his third voyage, Frobisher took with him a hundred colonists to settle on the lands he had discovered, the narrative of his Expedition tells of the services and character of Wolfall, their Chaplain, who was certainly the first Protestant missionary as well as minister on our Continent. It was after the recital of a marked deliverance that the old annalist proceeds to tell that—

"They highly praised God, and altogether vpon their knees gave Him due, humble and hearty thanks; and Maister Wolfall, a learned man, appointed by her Majestie's Councell to be their Minister and Preacher, made vnto them a godley sermon, exhorting them especially to be thankful to God for their strange and miraculous deliuerance in those so dangerous places and putting them in mind of the vncertaintie of man's life, willed them to make themselves alwayes readie as resolute men to enjoy and accept thankfully whatsoever aduventure His diuine Providence should appoint. This Maister Wolfall, being well seated and settled at home in his owne countrey, with a good and large liuing, having a good honest woman to wife and very towardly children, being of good reputation among the best, refused not to take in hand this painefull voyage, for the onely care he had to saue soules, and to reforme these infidels if it were possible to Christianitie: and also partly for the great desire that he had that this notable voyage so well begunne, might be brought to perfection: and therefore he was contented to stay the whole yeare, if occasion had serued, being in euery necessary action, as forward as the resoluest men of them all.—



Wherefore, in this behalfe, he may rightly be called a true Pastor and Minister of God's Word, which for the profite of his flocke spared not his own life."c

The pious faith of these brave discoverers, and the source whence their strength for endurance came, appears in further extracts such as this, under date of August 20th, 1578 :

"Maister Wolfall on Winter's Furnace, preached a godly sermon, which being ended, he celebrated also a Communion upon the land, at the partaking whereof was the Captaine of the *Anne Francis*, and many other Gentlemen and Souldiers, Mariners and Miners with him. The celebration of the diuine mystery was the first signe, seale, and confirmation of Christ's name, death, and passion, euer known in these quarters. The said Mr. Wolfall made sermons, and celebrated the Communion at sundry other times, in seuerall and sundry ships, because the whole company could neuer meet together in any one place."d

The same year Sir Humphrey Gilbert obtained his patent for discovery, which, as his son Raleigh Gilbert was connected with our "Popham" colony, stands in close relationship with that later movement we are about to notice. This Patent conferred upon the worthy Knight full power and authority over the lands he should discover, and established in the Colonies to be settled under his leadership "the true Christian faith or religion now profesed in the Church of England."e—In pursuance of these designs, after one unsuccessful attempt, Gilbert and his company landed on the shores of Newfoundland on Sunday, Aug. 4, 1583, and on the following day took formal possession of the Island.—This done, the first of all the laws which he enacted, enjoined that the services of religion should be "in publique exercise according to the Church of England."f Lost at sea in a fearful storm on his return voyage, Gilbert died as a Christian hero should die. Choosing the weakest vessel as his own, he was last seen "sitting abaft with a booke in his hand," and his last words were "we are as neare to heaven by *sea as by land*." The sea swallowed him up; but his faith and his example were the encouragements of those who a few years later settled on the coast of Maine.

The close connection of the English Church with these early efforts for maritime discovery and colonization, is seen in the aid given by the Rev. Richard Hakluyt, the excellent prebendary of Westminster, in the early expeditions following Gosnold's return in 1602.—The expedition of Martin Pring in 1603, was undertaken by the chief merchants and inhabitants of Bristol, mainly at the solicitation and through the influence of this noble old Churchman, whose name is not only inseparably connected with the efforts for settlement, but is also illustrious for the pious care with which he has preserved for posterity the quaint narratives of the old voyagers Hakluyt had earlier incited Raleigh to the work

to which this nobleman afterwards gave so many of his best years, on the ground that "no greater monument could he raise, no brighter name could he leave to future generations, than the evidence that he had therein sought to restrain the fierceness of the barbarian, and enlighten his darkened mind to the knowledge of the true God."g And now that Raleigh's efforts to the Southward had failed of permanence,—though there had been gained at Raleigh's colony at Roanoke, in 1587, the baptism into the English Church of the first aboriginal convert to Christianity,\*—Hakluyt sought in other quarters to encourage that spirit of adventure and colonization which should result in the gain of lands and nations to the service of Christ and His Church.h

The expedition which Richard Hakluyt had aided in sending to the Northeast coast of America in 1603, was followed by another also dispatched from Bristol under the command of George Weymouth, in 1605, fitted out by Henry Wriothsley, Earl of Southampton, the friend and patron of Shakspeare, and Thomas, Lord Arundel,i who had earlier been concerned in Gosnold's expedition. We have no certain knowledge that this expedition was accompanied by a chaplain, other than the fact that voyagers rarely went on such undertakings without the presence of a clergyman, and the inference we may draw from Rosier's own words in his account of the voyage, where he says they had two of the Indians "in presence at service, who behaved themselves very civilly, neither laughing nor talking all the time."j This whole account, to quote the fitting language of Anderson,k "bears evident marks of having been written by one who, whilst he recorded fresh discoveries and opportunities of extending temporal dominion, sought thereby to enlarge the borders of Christ's spiritual kingdom." An instance of this we may cite where the true objects of the expedition are announced—"We supposing not a little present profit, but a public good and true zeal of promulgating God's holy Church by planting Christianity, to be the sole interest of the honorable setters forth of this discovery,"l &c.

It was on the receipt of the cheering intelligence gained by these voyages, that there appeared the first Letters Patent granted by King James I. for the plantation of Virginia. These letters Patent bear date April 10, 1606. The whole territory assigned by this instrument was that portion of the American Continent lying between the 34th and 45th degrees of latitude and the islands adjacent to it within an hundred miles of the coast. This vast grant was divided into two parts; the first, that to the Southward, between the 34th and 41st degree of North latitude, being assigned to Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Somers, Rev. Richard Hakluyt, and others, and the remainder, to the Northward, afterwards named, by Prince Charles, New England, was granted to Thomas Hanham, Raleigh Gilbert, William Parker, George Pop-

ham, and others, of the towns of Plymouth, Bristol, and Exeter. The religious character of those who sought these grants is apparent from the professed object of their efforts for Colonization as set forth in the Patent itself, where it is expressly stated that the desire of the Patentees was granted by the King that—

“So noble a worke may by the Providence of Almighty God hereafter tend to the glorie of his Divine Majesty, in propagating of Christian religion to such people as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God, and may in time bring the infidels and savages (living in those parts) to human civility and to a settled and quiet government.”<sup>m</sup>

An ordinance under the sign-manual of the King, and the Privy Seal, explanatory of these Letters Patent, and passed Nov. 20, 1606, before any expedition under either of these grants had sailed, further provides,—

“That the said presidents, councils, and the ministers, should provide that the Word and service of God be preached, planted, and used, not only in the said colonies, but also, as much as might be, among them, according to the rites and doctrine of the Church of England.”<sup>n</sup>

Under this Royal Patent the first expedition to Virginia sailed Dec. 19, 1606, and landed at Jamestown, May 13, 1607. This colony had for its chaplain the saintly Robert Hunt, an English clergyman chosen for this holy work by the celebrated Hakluyt, with the concurrence of Archbishop Bancroft, the Primate of all England. Of his pious labors, and of the godly men who followed him, Bucke, Whittaker, and Copeland, and others like them, devoted Presbyters of the English Church, we have not time to speak. They labored not alone for the white colonists, but for the aborigines. Their efforts were not unsuccessful, and their record is on high.

A little later the same year, May 31, 1607, —the expeditions of the preceding year having proved unsuccessful—the first colony to the Northern Virginia, or, as it was afterwards called, New England, set sail from Plymouth under the patronage of Sir John Popham, Lord Chief Justice of England, and Sir Ferdinando Gorges. This expedition, as was the case with that to the Chesapeake, had its chaplain. It is but recently that his name has been discovered. That honored name is Richard Seymour. An ingenious conjecture, very plausibly supported, has been lately advanced by one of our most exact and well-informed historical investigators, that this clergyman was connected with the Ducal house of Somerset, the family name of which house being the same as that of our first New England missionary clergyman, and that he was possibly a younger son of the first Duke, who was himself but a few years afterwards a Patentee in the company which succeeded that of which we have been speaking.<sup>o</sup> Be this as it may, that Richard Seymour was a Presbyter of the English Church, has been acknowledged by our most pains-

taking and accurate historical writers,<sup>p</sup> and the language of Strachey, the historian of the expedition, in which the services of the Church and the Public Prayers themselves, are referred to in language no Puritan would ever have employed, is conclusive on this point.

This colony, brought to our coast in a fly-boat called the *Gift of God*, under Popham's command, and the good ship *Mary and John*, of London, of which Raleigh Gilbert, son of Sir Humphrey, was the Captain, came in Aug. 7, to an island where “they found a crosse set up, one of the same which Captain George Weyman, in his discovery, for all after occasions, left,”<sup>q</sup> and on “Sunday, the chief of both the shippes, with the greatest part of all the company, landed on the island where the crosse stood, which they called St. George's Island, and heard a sermon delivered unto them by Mr. Seymour, his preacher, and soe returned aboured againe.” Having chosen a fitting place for their settlement, near the mouth of the river, on the 19th of August, 1707, as Strachey informs us,—

“They all went ashoare where they had made choise of their plantation, and where they had a sermon delivered unto them by their preacher; and after the sermon, the president's commission was read, with the lawes to be observed and kept.

George Popham, gent., was nominated president;

Captain Raleigh Gilbert,  
James Davies,  
Richard Seymer, preacher,  
Captain Richard Davies,  
Captain Harlow, . . .

were all sworn assistants; and soe they returned back againe.”<sup>r</sup>

Mindful of their professed designs for the instruction of the Indians, after several explorations, in which, though under much provocation, they abstained from firing their guns at the crafty natives, they sought to bring them to their humble church, and there acquaint them with the worship of the Englishman's God. Under date of Oct. 4th, the narrative thus details one of these efforts:

“There came two canoes to the fort, in which were Nahanada and his wife, and Skidwares, and the Basshabaes brother, and one other called Amenquin, a Sagamo; all of whom the president feasted and entertained with all kindness, both that day and the next, which being Sundaye, the president carried them with him to the place of publike prayers, which they were at both morning and evening, attending yt with great reverence and silence.”<sup>s</sup>

Thus cultivating amity with the natives, and thus mindful of their God and Church, this little colony proceeded to establish themselves upon our soil. Their success is thus summed up by their careful historian—

“They fully finished the fort, trencht, and fortified yt with twelve pieces of ordnance, and built fifty houses therein, besides a church and a storehouse; and the carpenters framed a pretty Pynnace of about some thirty tonne,



which they called the *Virginia*; the chief ship-wright being one Digby of London."<sup>t</sup>

The death of Popham on the 5th of Feb. 1608, and the loss of their storehouse and many of their buildings by fire, the severity of the weather, noticed as extraordinary even in Europe, and the necessity arising for the return to England of Gilbert in consequence of the decease of his brother there, caused the re-embarkation of the colonists at Fort St. George and the disappointment of the plans of Gorges and his fellow adventurers. But they still persevered, and after years of efforts and small returns it was reserved for the tyrannous hand of Massachusetts to crush out the independence and existence of the Episcopal province of Maine.

And now the question arises, not indeed from Episcopalians but from others, how do we know that the use of the Common Prayer preface the sermon given on that memorable Aug. 19, 1607, thus giving it claim to the honor of having been the first form of worship in the English tongue sounded on the crisp air of New England? The subsequent language of Strachey, where he refers to the "morning and evening" and "public prayers," is certainly conclusive, when we remember that the use of the Book of Common Prayer was then obligatory by the terms of the very Patent under which these men had sailed. The nature of the service in which they were engaged confirms this statement. It was the public induction into office of the magistrates of the new plantation, and the statute law of England then, as was the case for many subsequent years, required the reception of the sacrament from the hands of a clergyman of the Established Church, either at the time or immediately after such formal institution.— This was the case in the sister colony of Virginia, where, on June 21st, of this same year, the day after the members of the Council had been fully sworn in and the organization of the government happily accomplished, the Holy Sacrament was duly celebrated for the first time within the limits of the United States.<sup>u</sup> That a similar observance marked these inaugural rites on our Northern coast, it is hardly possible to doubt, and the fact that special mention is not made of it by Strachey, who received his knowledge of the fortunes of the Sagadahoc Colony at second hand, and who has condensed his account of their proceedings into the briefest possible space, is easily explained on the ground that such a procedure was the ordinary rule, and that only the exception would be likely to receive direct notice. Surely to convince us that the Episcopal liturgy was used in connection with this sermon, it were enough to cite, in addition to the positive injunction of the Patent, the "laws of uniformity" and "canons ecclesiastical" of England then enforced by the court of High Commission.— The *disuse* of this service would have perilled the very existence of the company, had they desired it; while the fact that they sent out in every subsequent case none but clergymen

well affected towards the Church of England,<sup>v</sup> proves that no such wish was ever entertained by them. The connection of the principal men of the colony with England's highest noblemen as well as with her Christian worthies of an earlier day, goes to confirm the fact of the Episcopal character of both preacher and people; and Popham's brother and Raleigh's nephew and Gilbert's son would hardly be found linked in with the determined "separatists" from the English Church at so early a date as this. In fact the "separation" from the Church of England had not as yet begun, for if we may credit Neal, the first actual instance of "Independency" or "Congregationalism" in England was not till the year 1616, when Henry Jacob gathered his "Church" and openly separated from the Establishment.<sup>w</sup>

And now, to sum up all this matter, in the language of one, the weight of whose authority has secured these words of his a place in the Historical Collections of Maine, these facts are established: "That the first religious services of which any knowledge has been preserved, as having taken place in New England,<sup>x</sup> were performed by the chaplain of this colony; that these services were held in accordance with the ritual of the Church of England, that the minister who celebrated this worship and preached these sermons was a clergyman of that Church, deriving his authority for his sacred office from ordination by the hands of a Bishop of the same Church; and that these acts were performed at first on an island, and in the open air, and afterwards continuously in a church near the Kennebec river, on the West side of one of the peninsulas' of the coast, in the year 1607, *thirteen years before the landing of the colony on Plymouth Rock*, and some time before the Puritans left England to reside for a season in Holland."<sup>y</sup>

The celebration of this interesting event, the first real occupation and settlement of New England, from which the title of England to a most important share of the northern coast of America dates, would have been confessedly imperfect, and certainly unworthy of the high and holy faith of the adventurers whom it would commemorate, without suitable religious services. It was but just these services should reproduce the words of prayer and praise first echoed on the still air of New England in August, 1607.

These *very words*, made use of 255 years ago by Richard Seymour, Presbyterian of the Church of England, are still preserved. Popham's colony bore to our shores the revised Prayer Book of the reign of James I. Its words, with but few modifications and changes, are heard Sunday after Sunday in every Episcopal church, whether of the English or American Communion, all over the world.— The *old words themselves*, identical, unchanged, are accessible both in the few copies of the original edition of 1604 in our public libraries, and in the reprint issued by Mr. Wm. Pickering of London, a few years since.

It is but just to mention in this connection the attempt of the author of "Ancient Pemaquid," to make out a charge of "Puritanism" against Seymour and his fellow colonists at Fort St. George in consequence of the title "Preacher" appended to Seymour's name, and the mention of the fact that a "Sermon" was delivered on the occasion of the landing, in Strachey's narrative.

"One incident in Strachey's narrative must not be passed without notice. On the only two occasions of special religious celebration the first Sunday, and the organization of the Government, they heard a *sermon* delivered unto them by their *preacher*, Mr. Richard Seymour.' Thus 'Puritanism' tinctured New England history at the start; the *preacher* and the *sermon*, already detested in England, were happily inaugurated on New England soil, the chiefest feature in her future policy and history, her very life."<sup>z</sup>

In this, as in the quiet ignoring of the sermons and services of the Episcopal Clergy at the time of the War of Independence so apparent in the same writer's "Pulpit of the American Revolution," the author of "Ancient Pemaquid" has suffered his admiration of the politics and principles of the Plymouth and Massachusetts-Bay settlers to lead him to a disingenuous statement. The words "Preacher" and "Sermon," the only proofs of Puritanism he adduces in support of his assertion, will be found to have another history and to have been any thing but "detested" by the English Church, if her recorded formularies and documents are to be believed. In the "injunctions" of King Edward VI. A. D. 1547, the whole body of the English Clergy of the Establishment is spoken of as "Preachers."<sup>aa</sup> It was one of the "Items" of Queen Elizabeth's Injunctions in the year 1589, "That no man shall willingly let or disturb the Preacher;"<sup>bb</sup> and later in her reign (13 Anno Eliz.) the word is used again, e: g: "The age of a Minister or Preacher," "special gift or ability to be a Preacher," "He shall then be [a Bachelor of Divinity or Preacher lawfully allowed by some Bishop of the Realm or by one of the Universities, &c." In the "Articles for Doctrine and Preaching" Anno, 1564, the word is used as synonymous with "Parson,"—"Item If any Preacher or Parson, Vicar or Curate," &c.<sup>cc</sup> In the same Convocation, in which subscription to the XXXIX Articles was imposed upon the Clergy of the English Church it was enjoined, "in the first place let preachers take care that they never teach any thing, &c. except what is agreeable to the doctrine of the Old and New Testament," &c.<sup>dd</sup> And so I might proceed, citing page after page of authorities, dating from the record of that famous *Preacher* and Bishop, Hugh Latimer; whose *sermon* at Paul's Cross has become an historic epoch in the History of England's

reformation, to the very year when a *preacher* and his *sermon* is referred to in Strachey's History of our Northern Virginia Colony and to the date but three years later, when "*true preachers*" and "every Sunday sermons twice a day, and every Thursday a sermon"<sup>ee</sup> are recorded in the paragraph of Purchas telling of the "Establishment" of that rank "High Churchman," De la Warr, in the Southern Virginia, whose church with its "Chancel of Cedar," and "Font," "trimmed up with divers flowers," savors of any thing but Puritanism. Surely a charge so feebly supported as this, should be withdrawn, and the fact that "sermons" and "preachers" were not "detested" by England's Church and England's Colonies, should be allowed. No one familiar either with the narratives of the old voyagers or the common language of the Theological writers of the age could have made so loose a statement. At least till *proof*, rather than mere assertion, to the contrary is furnished, we shall claim Seymour, England's first Protestant minister and missionary on our Northern coasts, as a Presbyterian of the Anglican Communion.

<sup>a</sup> Hakluyt iii. 74, quoted in Prot. Epis. Hist. Collections ii. 244.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid. Quoted in Anderson's History of the Colonial Church, i. 81.

<sup>c</sup> Anderson's Colonial Church, i. 81, 82.

<sup>d</sup> Ibid, 82.

<sup>e</sup> Ibid, 48, Hazard's State Papers. 1. 24. The early charters as contained in Hazard, and elsewhere, are full of proof of this design of christianizing the Indians

<sup>f</sup> Anderson, i. 53; Palfrey's Hist. of New England 1. 68.

<sup>g</sup> In a Latin Epistle Dedicatory to Peter Martyr's Hist. of the New World.

<sup>h</sup> Vide Anderson, 1. 75, or Bancroft's Account of Early settlements in the first Volume of his History.

<sup>i</sup> Hakluyt's efforts for colonization are fully detailed in Anderson, 1. 156-162, and are noticed in Williamson Hist. of Maine, i. 185.

<sup>j</sup> Strachey's Hist. of Travall, 153; Williamson, i. 191.

<sup>k</sup> Ballard's Episcopal Church in Maine, in Hist. Collections, vi. 165.

<sup>l</sup> Colonial Church, i. 162.

<sup>m</sup> Palfrey's New England, i. 76, note.

<sup>n</sup> Anderson, i. 165.

<sup>o</sup> Stith's Virginia, 37; Chalmer's Political Annals, 16; Anderson, i. 166.

<sup>p</sup> Vide a deeply interesting article in the "Church Monthly," i. 56, written by the Rev. W. S. Bartlett.

<sup>q</sup> For instance Willis in Maine Hist. Coll. v. 351; Anderson, i. 350; Williamson, and others.

<sup>r</sup> Strachey in Maine Hist. Coll. iii. 296, 297.

<sup>s</sup> Strachey in Maine Hist. Coll. iii. 301.

<sup>t</sup> Ibid, 307.

<sup>u</sup> Ibid, 308.

<sup>v</sup> Anderson, i. 174, 175.

<sup>w</sup> Such as the Rev. William Morrell, the Rev. Richard Gibson, and the Rev. Robert Jordan, all pioneers of the English Church in America.

<sup>x</sup> History of the Puritans, Part II. chapter 2.

<sup>y</sup> Ballard, in Maine Hist. Coll. vi. 177, 178.

<sup>z</sup> i. e. as afterwards known in the Map of Capt. John Smith.

<sup>aa</sup> Me. Hist. Col. V. 150.

<sup>bb</sup> Sparrow's Collection of Articles, &c. p. 8.

<sup>cc</sup> Sparrow's Collection.

<sup>dd</sup> Sparrow's Collection.

<sup>ee</sup> Canon. Eccles. Angl. XIX. A. D. 1571.

<sup>ff</sup> Purchas, quoted in Anderson's Col. ch. I. 216, 217



















46. 118. 1. 18



